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Returning Fatherhood

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Reinventing Fatherhood

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CONTENTS

		Page
Introduction		1
I.	**The rise in fatherlessness and new family forms**	2
II.	**The father-friendly workplace**	6
III.	**A more involved role at home**	11
IV.	**Fathers in the community**	15
V.	**Teaching fatherhood**	18
VI.	**Walking tall: a new paradigm**	23

Introduction

These are times when fatherhood is moving in two contradictory directions. The rise in fatherlessness is happening at the very time when fatherhood itself is being redefined by many men and women.

Fathering has never been easy for any generation. Most Western cultures barely have a language to describe fatherhood. Among citations on parenting in the library of the University of California, references to motherhood outnumber mentions of fatherhood by five to one. During the 1970s and 1980s, the phrases most commonly used to describe good fathers in the United States of America were "Mr. Mom" and the "new father", who were said to be far more nurturing than the "old fathers" of the 1950s. The new standard was overblown; for one thing, those 1950s fathers were likely to be around more, even if they were not necessarily so nurturing. "Mr. Mom", a term used for fathers who stay home with the children, or who are at least responsible for most of the housework and child care, is, in a sense, a diminishing term: it suggests that such a father is a second-class mother. The new father aims at androgyny, says fatherhood expert David Blankenhorn, President of the Institute for American Values. The term: "Suggests that good men are those who eschew many historically masculine traits (such as protecting and providing for wife and children) and cultivate historically feminine traits (such as emotional sensitivity and the nurturance of young children)." Blankenhorn and others see merit in the ideal of the sensitive new father "as a corrective to an older norm." But as a new definition of masculinity, he suspects "that most men, and perhaps most women, find it lacking."[1]

Many experts believe that fathers do parent differently; for example, men tend to play rougher and more adventurously with their children and, if only because of upper body strength, offer a distinctive discipline to adolescents. Nonetheless, experts often expressed ambivalence about assigning precise roles to parents based on their gender. They expressed a sense that the role of fathers is changing in Western society, and that this change represents both a threat and an opportunity.[2]

I. The rise in fatherlessness and new family forms

In much of the world, it is premature or irrelevant to talk of a new fatherhood based on shared parenting. "Although different societies have very different views about what qualities are masculine, such qualities are invariably more highly valued than those thought to be feminine", writes Jo Boyden, in her book *Families: Celebration and hope in a world of change.*

> "In many societies, men have considerable authority over women. It is the male's family that a bride usually joins. In extreme cases, women lay down their own lives at the death of their husbands. In modern industrial society many old customs have vanished, but signs of them remain: at marriage the father 'gives' the bride away; the husband 'chooses her hand'."[3]

She points out that women comprise about half the world's population, perform about two thirds of its work, receive only one tenth of its income and own less than one hundredth of its assets. The price is high:

> "Although women live longer than men ... in many countries of Asia and the Pacific there are fewer than 95 women for every 100 men. The reason for this, the UN has shown, is that there are higher death rates for women in poor countries. They generally receive inferior nutrition, health care, and education."[4]

According to the World Health Organization, contraceptive use worldwide is three times greater among women than men, yet female contraceptive methods present higher risks. Most sexually transmitted diseases also have graver medical consequences for women than men.[5]

Even as the concepts of shared parenting and shared breadwinning gain currency in Western media, the reality of emotional and physical fatherlessness grows. Boyden cites a study of four-year-olds in 10 countries that discovered that the average daily time that fathers spent alone with their children was less than one hour, ranging from 6 minutes per day in Hong Kong and 12 minutes in Thailand to 54 minutes in China and 48 minutes in Finland. When the average time spent by both parents with their children was added to these amounts, the number of hours that fathers were present with their children ranged from 1 hour and 36 minutes per day in the United States to 3 hours and 42 minutes in Belgium. "These findings suggest that even when fathers are present as an active member of a family their direct involvement in child care can be very limited."[6]

Father hunger, or awareness of it, is especially acute in the United States. Some observers believe that the United States is in danger of becoming, in effect, a fatherless society, shorn of its male parents not by war or disease, but by choice. A look at the statistics of family life suggests that this is not an exaggeration. One American study suggests that two years after a divorce, more than 80 per cent of the non-custodial parents, most of them fathers, have little or no steady pattern of visitation with the children. A second reason for fatherlessness is the rise in out-of-wedlock births. In 1990, 27 per cent of all births, more than one in four, were to unmarried women, a fivefold increase in 30 years, according to the Census Bureau. (The rate peaked in the 1970s and has dropped slightly.)[7] The percentage of white children born to single parents has nearly doubled over the last decade, to almost 20 per cent and is a much faster growth rate than that found among African Americans.

New family forms

Another way of looking at the rise of fatherlessness is that it represents a worldwide movement away from marriage, towards new forms of families and a wider choice of living and

parenting arrangements. Alternative family forms are increasing in number and variety. Cohabiting couples, for example, have increased from half a million in 1970 to 2.5 million in 1988.[8] The proportion of births to those living out of wedlock has increased significantly in countries in all regions, according to Boyden. The proportion of women bearing children without a partner is also growing. In both Belize and Sweden about half of all births are to unmarried women. The majority of Western men and women are married by the age of 30, according to Boyden:

> "Half the women in Africa, 40 per cent in Asia, and 30 per cent in Latin America are married by the age of eighteen. In recent years, however, global statistics show that the proportion of married people has fallen, indicating the trend toward later marriage - and an overall decline in marriage in the developed regions. Even if marriage is less common, this does not mean a movement away from life as a couple. Many people in developed regions, Latin America, and the Caribbean live together -often recognized as 'married' in law."[3]

Families today include nuclear families, unmarried heterosexual and homosexual couples, single-parent families, step-families, foster and adoptive families, childless couples and multiple-adult households. In the United States, and perhaps in other countries, single-father families are growing at a faster rate than the multitude of other family types. Still, single fathers constitute a demographic blip on the screen. The vast majority of single parents are still mothers.

This shift is having a profound impact on how children grow up. In the United States, one in four American children live in single-parent, usually female-headed, households. More than half can expect to live in such households before they turn 18. About 40 per cent of the children who live in fatherless households have not seen their fathers for at least a year. Of the remaining 60 per cent, only one in five of these children sleeps even one night a month in their father's home. Only one in six sees his or her father an average of once or more a week, according to a study by Frank F. Furstenberg Jr. and Kathleen Mullan Harris, both of the University of Pennsylvania. More than half the children whose fathers do not live with them have never been in the paternal home.

The price of fatherlessness

While many single mothers are clearly able to raise effective, healthy children, the odds are against them, at least in the United States, given current economic and social realities. The following studies show the importance of having more than one parent in the household:

- Most single mothers work full time, but earn no more than $20,000 and receive little child support. A child in a female-headed household is six times more likely to be poor than a child in a two-parent family. The median per capita income for children in single-parent families is less than one third of the median per capita income of those from two-parent families. Two thirds of single-parent children will fall into poverty before they reach the age of 18, compared with 20 per cent of those from two-parent families. After divorce, children are twice as likely to be poor, according to a Census Bureau study.[9]

- Most research on infant health has focused on the behaviour of the expectant mother, according to Dr. Louis W. Sullivan, a former Secretary of Health and Human Services in the United States:

> "We are beginning to realize, however, that the behavior of the expectant father is also very important. Having the support of a husband may play a larger role in infant health care than factors such as maternal income and educational attainment. For example, the mortality rate of infants born to college educated but unmarried mothers is higher than for infants born to married high school drop-outs."[10]

- The most reliable predictor of crime and teenage pregnancy is not income or race, but family structure. Seventy per cent of imprisoned United States minors have spent at least part of their lives without fathers. Gangs feed on fatherless sons, as Nina J. Easton reported in the *Los Angeles Times Magazine:*

> "Father Greg Boyle of Dolores Mission Church in East Los Angeles once listed the names of the first 100 gang members that came to mind and then jotted a family history next to each. All but five were no longer living with their biological fathers - if they ever had."[11]

- The proportion of single-parent households in a community predicts its rates of violent crime and burglary, according to a study of researchers Robert Sampson and W. Byron Groves published in the *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*:

> "Two-parent households provide increased supervision and guardianship not only for their own children and household property, but also for general activities in the community. From this perspective, the supervision of peer-group and gang activity is not simply dependent on one child's family, but on a network of collective family control."[12]

The relationship between crime and fatherlessness is seen in all segments of society, but it is most pronounced in inner cities, where murder is the leading killer of young men. According to Mercer Sullivan, a research associate at the New School for Social Research in New York, where he has been studying the inner city for the last 30 years: "It's not just the absence of a stable adult male figure from a single household that does so much damage in these communities. At the neighbourhood level, when you have lots of households where fathers are not present, the whole social order breaks down. Teenagers take over the streets."[13]

- Children with fathers at home tend to do better at school, are less prone to depression and are more successful in relationships. Children of single-parent families are about 50 per cent more likely to have learning disabilities. Children from divorced families, especially boys, on average score lower on reading and mathematics tests. Single-parent children are twice as likely to drop out of high school as two-parent children.[14]

- Other long-range studies have shown that elementary schoolchildren from divorced families (who usually live with their mothers) are absent more, are more anxious, hostile and withdrawn, and are less popular with their peers than their classmates from intact families.[14]

- Children from one-parent families (again, usually mothers) achieve less and get into more trouble than children from two-parent homes, according to a study of 18,000 students sponsored by the National Association of Elementary School Principals in the United States. In fact, children from low-income two-parent families outperformed students from high-income single-parent homes.[15] Almost twice as many high-achievers come from two-parent homes as one-parent homes.[16]

- Children from single-parent homes are as much as 200 per cent more likely than children from two-parent families to suffer emotional and behavioural problems, according to a study by the National Center for Health Statistics in the United States. Over 80 per cent of the adolescents admitted to hospitals for psychiatric reasons come from single-parent families.[14] What about children with step-parents? The financial conditions of these children improve, but they are at least as likely as children from single-parent families to have learning disabilities and emotional and behavioural problems.[14]

- The cycle continues: adults who grew up in divorced homes are more likely to be unhappy, in poor health, and dissatisfied with their lives, and more likely to become single parents themselves.

- Compared with adults who have grown up in two-parent households, men from divorced families are 35 per cent more likely, and women 60 per cent more likely, to get divorced or separated. Psychologist Judith Wallerstein, co-author of *Second Chances: Men, Women, & Children A Decade After Divorce*, followed the progress of 130 children of divorced parents 15 years after the divorce. Many of the boys experienced learning and behavioural trouble in school. In their early years, the girls did much better emotionally in school than the boys. (In fact, as other studies have shown, they did even better than girls from intact families.) But Wallerstein found that by the time they became young adults, girls and boys were experiencing equal difficulty in forming loving relationships. The girls were fearful of being alone, fearful that men would abandon or betray them. Many of the girls jumped from male to male, married early and divorced at a high rate. The boys, as they grew up, resisted relationships with girls.[14]

II. The father-friendly workplace

Many observers believe that a new fatherhood is finally becoming a reality because of changes in the workplace brought about by new technologies, changes in the labour market, and the influence of women working outside the home. Some studies show that fathers feel more conflict between their jobs and their families than many of them will admit to their spouses or their bosses or even to themselves. Work/Family Directions, a consulting, management and research organization, based in Boston, Massachusetts, reports that men feel an increasing desire (and pressure from their spouses) to share housework and spend time with their children. Male employees experienced a doubling, from 1985 to 1988, of work-family conflicts; for example, the difficulty of finding child care during overtime hours.

"It's fair to ask whether society supports active parenting by women or men", writes Dr. Robert Glossop, director of programmes for the Vanier Institute for Family, and Ish Theilheimer, editor of *Transition* magazine. Peggy Nash, Director of Women's Programs, Canadian Auto Workers, sees:

> "Growing economic pressures on families that make it tough for parents to do their jobs. Global trade and industrial transformation are making workers insecure while, at the same time, social programs are being cut back. The free market, left to its own devices, usually won't create the social support to allow families to survive."[17]

Yet despite the odds, change is coming in the way in which many men view work and family, and gradual change is taking place in the workplace.

Pressure from below

Some fathers decide to put their careers on hold. *American Health* reports that, at one large Minneapolis company, about 60 per cent of the fathers under the age of 35 say that they are not currently aggressively seeking promotions or transfers for family reasons.[18] The trouble is that, implicit in the Daddy track is still the message that parents, fathers, are second-class employees. While many men will choose a less ambitious work path, the paring back of their careers (which has long-term economic implications for families and children) can be minimized if companies adopt flexible, family-friendly policies for all employees. Men will inevitably push back. One reason is demographic. Although they are still few in number proportionally, single fathers comprise the fastest growing type of households with working parents and children, according to statistics from the Bureau of Labor, United States, even though single working mothers still outnumber single fathers by four to one. Of men in the workplace, single fathers are more likely to feel a sense of urgency in creating family-friendly policies.[19] A second, and more important reason why change is inevitable: women are pushing companies to adjust their policies towards families. And, while fathers may not be rushing to take advantage of paternity leave, many of them are rearranging their priorities.

"Business used to think of employees as employees period", says Marie Tellier, Assistant Vice-President, Employment Equity, with Canadian National in Montreal. "They weren't parents or children of elderly people. They were just people who were supposed to come into work." According to Glossop and Theilheimer,[17] Tellier sees big changes in attitude and life styles among Canadian National's employees, with executives in three-piece suits bottle-feeding infants in the company's on-site day-care facilities and fathers saying that they cannot work late because they have to pick up their children. Besides day care, Canadian National offers counselling on all kinds of family matters, flexible work options, and time off for family duties. "I wouldn't say the work environment is absolutely open to parents," says Tellier, but "there is a little more acceptance."[20]

Examples of change

Company acceptance and accommodation of fathers varies widely, depending on culture, social class, and workplace. However some companies and countries are responding. *The Wall Street Journal* reports that nearly half of the 200 large-company United States executives surveyed by Robert Half International say that managers are not as willing to work long hours as they were five years ago. In 1991, the *Monthly Labor Review* surveyed two agencies of the federal Government that allowed flex-time. Almost half of the fathers chose this option, electing to come to work earlier so that they could leave earlier to spend more time with their families.[21] Johnson & Johnson now offers flex-time schedules. When Apple Computers announced its new family policy in 1991, the company devoted an entire page of its in-house newsletter to fathers, sending the message that the company's family policies applied to men, and not only to women. The article described the double standard towards fathers and mothers: that women are expected by the typical corporate culture to balance work and family, but men are not. Apple announced that this would no longer be the acceptable norm within the company.

Proponents of such programmes often argue for them on the basis of presumed increases in company productivity. According to a report by the Families and Work Institute, with headquarters in New York:

> "There is, however, very little research to back up such sweeping claims. Gradually these programs are being subjected to greater scrutiny by business management and the press. Managers have begun to question the effectiveness of work-family initiatives ... and the press has begun to question whether companies with high-profile, family-friendly initiatives actually practice what they preach."

In 1991, the Families and Work Institute asked the Fortune 1000 companies what family-supportive policies they offered. Johnson & Johnson has the most comprehensive policies in its Balancing the Work and Family Program. Among the impressive benefits offered: child-care resource and referral, on-site, child-development centres, family-care leave, time off for short-term emergency care, adoption benefits, School Match (a resource and referral service that assists parents in choosing public or private schools), elder-care resource and referral, and relocation planning. The company also provides training in work-family issues for managers. The study's results, released in April 1994, were encouraging. Among the findings were the following:

- From 1990 to 1992, there was a sharp increase in the proportion of employees who agreed strongly that their immediate supervisors were helpful with routine family or personal matters.

- Employees have become more open to telling the truth about family issues. (For example, they no longer call in to say they are sick when they need to stay at home with a sick child.)

- The proportion of employees who felt they paid a price for using flexible time and leave has decreased significantly.

- Employees affected by the family-supportive programmes are more loyal to the company, more satisfied with their jobs and more likely to recommend Johnson & Johnson as a place to work.

One of the more interesting findings was that some elements of the programme appeared to affect men and women differently. Mothers at Johnson & Johnson reported spending less time worrying about the welfare of their children with day care within walking distance. But fathers reported more distraction. Probably, that is because it is still something of a novelty for men to assume any responsibility for child care, and the fact that their children are within walking distance presents a distraction. Nevertheless, men who use on-site child care were significantly more likely to want to stay at Johnson & Johnson.[22]

Resistance

Several men have told the present writer that, as employees, they were afraid to take paternity leave or to even acknowledge their devotion to their family. They fear that, like women who end up on the second-tier Mommy track, they will be treated from that point on by the boss or by fellow workers as second-class employees. Even when paternity leave is offered, few men take it. Two out of five companies in the United States that grant family leave admit that they frown on men who apply for it, according to Catalyst, a research organization based in New York City.

Sweden leads the world in parental-leave policies, child care and women's labour force participation. Still, men take paternity leave so much less frequently than women do that the Swedish Government has sponsored advertising campaigns targeted at men. In the first year in which these policies were instituted, in 1974, only 3 per cent of eligible fathers actually took leave, according to a study conducted in 1991 by Linda Haas, a sociologist at Indiana University. By 1989, 44 per cent were doing so. In the Haas study, those fathers who took the leave took an average of 53 days, compared with 225 days for mothers.[23] Haas maintains that there are four categories of factors that prevent Swedish fathers from taking more paternal leave: biological factors, social-psychological factors, lack of social support, and economics. According to researchers Janet Shibley Hyde, Marilyn J. Essex and Francine Horton:

> "Regarding biological factors, it was traditionally assumed in Sweden that mothers were better able to meet their infants' needs. Furthermore, 90 per cent of Swedish mothers breast-feed for 5 months or more, again favouring women over men in taking leave. It is rare for Swedish fathers to take leave before the baby is 5 months old. Social-psychological factors include men's beliefs that they should be the primary breadwinner and the men's own lack of exposure to role models of men caring for infants. Lack of social support is a factor in that fathers may fear that people will form negative opinions of them for taking paternity leave; indeed, the majority of fathers in the Haas study did not receive positive support for taking parental leave from their friends and parents. The less likely the fathers were to receive support, the less likely they were to take leave. Economic factors are involved, too. The system of pay reimbursement favors leave taking by the lower-paid parent, usually the mother."[24]

Beyond the company: inventing new work/family systems

The rising economic and social pressure for shared parenting is having an impact on employees, particularly at companies without family-friendly work policies. "They used to say that as women entered the work force and there were more dual-earner families, that women would become more like men", according to Linda Duxbury, an associate professor of business at Carleton University in Ottawa, part of a team that conducted a national Canadian study on balancing work and family. "We've observed exactly the opposite. Men are becoming more like women: stressed out, suffering the same kinds of overload, the same kind of interference patterns between work and family as women traditionally have."[20] Sociologist Judith Stacey encountered some real surprises while researching for her book *Brave New Families*. She writes, "In a typical middle-class family, the man really does have higher career status and higher pay, and he doesn't really have much time to devote to his kids, even if he had the interest. In working class households, the structure of work is very different." Men are more likely to be laid off or to work shifts than women. At Levi Strauss & Co. (Canada) Inc., Julie White, manager of community affairs, sees attitudes changing among working-class men. She describes an employee who eavesdropped on a male-only Friday night poker game: "They spent the first two hours of the evening talking about toilet training."[20]

Some men are refusing to wait for their companies to change. Along with their wives, they are coming up with new ways to structure two-career households. Joe Dicks, 35, and

Linda Workman, 31, were married in 1986 and graduated from law school the same year. Joe was immediately offered a job with the biggest law firm in San Diego, and Linda went to work for another powerful local firm. Linda and Joe wanted to have children. "Joe and I couldn't wait for the world to become family-friendly, something had to give."

Usually, in a situation like this, the wife decides to stay home after a child is born, but Joe and Linda were convinced they had another option. "My firm had a slower career track for lawyers who wanted a slower pace", says Joe. "But it was a 'Mommy Track'. No man I knew at the firm had ever taken paternity leave, let alone chosen the slower track. To be honest, I don't think I could have taken that track and watched my colleagues pass me." So, Joe and Linda created their own family track. In anticipation of becoming a parent, Joe left the firm. In July 1992, their first child, Spencer, was born. Then Linda left her job. They opened separate law practices, and each of them cut the work week to four days. Their offices are on different floors of the same building. Linda takes Friday off to be with her son; Joe takes Monday. A part-time nanny helps out on the days when both of them are working. On weekends, they share the duties and joys of parenthood equally. "Our son has never gone through a stage where he preferred me over Joe", says Linda. Their income has dropped, but Joe believes that, over the long haul, they may earn more than some of their fellow attorneys "because we're less likely to burn out".[25]

Although the number of full-time at-home fathers is still proportionately small, they report that life at home can be surprisingly fulfilling, though sometimes frustrating. Many of them wear their role as a badge of honour. At-home father, Ted Bzdega, 38, of Des Moines, Iowa, says:

> "My wife is a physician, and makes a good living working many hours. We live out on a 70 acre farm, so I don't have a life much beyond the kids. I'm always there. The tough thing is your day doesn't have as much structure to it. But I sort of feel guilty that I'm having so much fun with my kids when my wife is going out to work."

When forced to loosen their grip on breadwinning as their primary identity, some men discover deeper dimensions of their fatherhood, and their manhood.

In Rifle, Colorado, an out-of-work construction worker, says:

> "I love my kids, and I want to take care of them the best way I know how. In order to do that, I've got to be that kind of a person, gentle. When I was growing up, I was a pretty hard-core person myself. I was kind of the bully of the crowd I ran around with. Me and my wife share on everything. When I was working all the time, I'd come home, help with the cooking, the dishes, the cleaning, raising of the children. I was hurt on the job; I ruptured three disks in my back. I've been laid up for a little more than a year and a half. I'm getting ready to retrain to go to school, to learn a new trade. My limitations are that I can't lift over ten pounds, I'm not supposed to work over 4 to 6 hours a day. I'm not supposed to sit over a period of time, or stand over a period of time. There's a lot of limitations. Now that I'm disabled and I'm home a lot, I take care of the kids at home while she's at work. When she gets home, she helps me. It's been real hard on me, being laid up, and real hard on my wife. I'm used to getting up at six in the morning, going to work all day, working till 5 or 6:00 at night and coming home. Now (my wife) gets up and goes to work, and I stay at home with the kids. I've learned that there's a lot more to home life, to raising the kids, than I really realized. In a way, hanging sheet rock was easier on me because I could take my frustrations out on the work. I would never hit my kids, it's one of my strong beliefs. When I was working, I only saw them at night. There's a closer bond now than there was before. When the baby - he's only a year old - was first born, he was always going to his mom. He was kind of a momma's boy. And now, when he gets hurt or something, he comes running to dad. He's becoming a daddy's boy. It's a neat feeling; I don't know how to describe it."[26]

Dr. Kyle Pruett, a clinical professor of psychiatry at the Child Study Center, Yale School of Medicine, conducted a five-year study of stay-at-home fathers and their children:

> "They were less defensively macho. Caring for another human being changes us all, men and women. It humanizes us ... The fathers become more considerate of their friends and families, find themselves more interested in human relationships, and are less competitive. But they don't lose their business sense or their edge. One father who kept at his real estate business said he became more efficient at negotiation because he learned to read people better."[27]

Mothers are often surprised at the changes they see in men as they become more intimately involved in fathering. Holly Rigby, of Burleson, Texas, tells how her husband was laid off eight months ago. She says:

> "I went back to work. This has been a very hard transition for him. I have been watching him change every day. His interaction with the children has changed beyond belief. I have taken time away in another room during dinner time and have listened to him and the children. If you had asked me three months ago if I ever thought he could be so much fun, so loving and caring with the kids I would have said 'no.' Well, I was wrong. He has become the best father I know of."[28]

Some men, linked to their offices or clients by computer, modem and fax machine, are discovering a kind of fatherhood that their great-great-grandparents might have recognized. Some men now work in what might be called a "virtual blacksmith shop". In their home office, they work at their computer while their sons, a few feet away, do their projects on their own computer. Such an arrangement is a relatively rare but growing result of the increase in home offices.

III. A more involved role at home

More attention is needed on the father's role at home, as worker and nurturer, by social scientists, psychologists and paediatricians. Most past research on child care and development has focused on infant-mother attachment. Among psychologists, the generally accepted theory is that children with a secure attachment to their mothers, especially during infancy, are more likely to feel confident, have good relationships with teachers and peers, and are more likely to be problem-solvers. But, until very recently, the father's role as a nurturer has been viewed by many researchers and media as being secondary to the mother's.

In an early edition of his famous guide to child rearing, Dr. Benjamin Spock advised fathers: "A man can be a warm father and a real man at the same time ... Of course, I don't mean that the father has to give just as many bottles or change just as many diapers as the mother. But it's fine for him to do these things occasionally. He might make the formula on Sunday." Times change. Today, the revised edition says:

> "I think that a father with a full-time job – even where a mother is staying home – will do best by his children, by his wife, and himself if he takes on half or more of the management of the children (and also participates in the housework when he gets home from work and on weekends)."[29]

The father as a nurturer at home is gaining cachet, but not without some serious revisions in parenting advice, and resistance from economies, institutions and parents.

The second shift

For the most part, however, women continue to assume most of the responsibility for child care, even as they pursue careers. In Japan, married career women are rare. Jo Boyden reports that: "A married woman is likely to be a 'sengyo-shufu' - full-time housewife – or a 'kengyo-shufu' – a housewife who works part-time."[3] At the same time, businessmen typically put in six days a week at the office. Some women work part time outside the home. Known as *'kengyo-shufu'* a married woman is expected to look after her children full-time until they are about to complete their schooling. She is then free to seek a job but finds that few are open to her, and usually ends up doing manual work with poor pay and little security. When some Japanese women rise in the business world, they are expected to work as obsessively as men. "Until male working hours are reduced and child care services provided, Japanese women will continue having to choose between family and career."[3] Boyden continues: "Women everywhere work more than men - on the average, twice as many hours a day in the developing world. The burden of family life falls mostly on women, and their role in producing the goods on which families depend for their survival is often ignored. In many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, for example, women undertake the arduous and heavy agricultural work, in addition to the bearing and caring of children, and running the home and family life. Yet it is men who control the resources of production."[30]

Arlie Hochschild states that the questions of who does what and what needs doing can become the sources of deep tension in a marriage. Among the American families that Hochschild studied over an eight-year period, the fact that wives worked outside the home did not account for why some marriages were happy and others were not; what contributed to happiness was the husband's willingness to share the work at home. Whether traditional or more egalitarian, couples were happier when the men did a sizeable share of housework and child care. She points out that in one study of 600 couples filing for divorce, the second most common reason women cited for wanting to divorce, after "mental cruelty", was their husbands' neglect of home or children. Women mentioned this reason more than finances, physical abuse, drinking or infidelity.

Hochschild's study found that, when hours of work outside and inside the home were added up, women in the 1960s and 1970s worked roughly 15 more hours each week than men. Over a year, they worked an extra month of 24-hour days. Over a dozen years, they worked an extra year of 24-hour days. Most women, according to Hochschild, work one shift at the office or factory and a second shift at home. She came to believe that:

> "Those husbands who helped very little at home were often just as deeply affected as their wives – through the resentment their wives felt toward them and through their own need to steel themselves against that resentment ... Even when husbands happily shared the work, their wives felt more responsible for home and children. More women than men kept track of doctor's appointments and arranged for kids' playmates to come over."

Also, she found, that when men do participate in the care of their children, they choose more of the fun jobs, for example, taking their kids to the park while the wife does the dishes.[31]

Towards shared parenting in the home

The home front, however, may be improving. *American Demographics* magazine reports that research carried out from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s shows that men have been doing a gradually greater share of housework since 1965. Between 1965 and 1985, men have gone from 5 to 20 hours of housework a week.[32]

The thousands of fathers who responded to the fatherhood poll conducted by *Parents* in 1993 showed that fathers have come a long way in the 10 years since the previous fatherhood poll was carried out in 1984. In 1993, on almost every front, from household chores to daily child care, men have moved closer to parity with women. This is particularly true for families whose mothers work full time outside the home. Increasingly, many fathers have become involved in their children's lives in areas in which their own fathers were excluded. For example, fathers are now likely to be present in the delivery room, an experience that their fathers never had. This experience, increasing in frequency, often has a profound influence on a father and his children. "The joy of seeing a child born is indescribable, and having delivered many during medical school did not prepare me for the excitement of my son's first cry", says Tennessee physician Jerry L. Roberts.[33] One study found that of 20 deeply involved fathers, all but one had witnessed their children's births.[18] This is one of the most positive changes about fathering today.

The *American Demographics* and *Parents* magazine reports seem to suggest an impressive increase, except that men still do only one fifth of the cooking, cleaning, and laundry.[32] If men continue at the rate of progress reported by *Parents* magazine, they will be doing as many child-related chores as women in the year 2118. "We're in the midst of an evolution", says James Levine, director of the Fatherhood Project, quoted in *American Health*, "not a revolution".[18]

"It's still difficult for the man and for society", says Dr. Kyle Pruett. "Most men find themselves explaining what they're doing with the child at the supermarket week after week. The first response they get is, 'Isn't that lovely – you're babysitting!' But when it keeps happening, most men get pretty perturbed."[27] However, men are less and less likely to let such comments go unchallenged. "Since I do the shopping I take Kayle with me when I can", says William Partenheimer of Stone Mountain, Georgia. "We went to the store the other day and saw a lady I work with. Her response was, 'Oh, I see you are babysitting today'. Well I do not consider that babysitting. I am her father and she is just as much my responsibility as she is my wife's."[34]

Resistance in the family

James Levine argues that, within families, cultural resistance to fatherhood, especially the new father, must be identified and challenged, not only the father's resistance, but also that of other members of the nuclear and extended family. For example, when a man does take family leave or decide to be a part- or full-time at-home father, he may encounter subtle or not-so-subtle messages from his in-laws, such as: Aren't you working? Don't you have a job yet? A mother can also communicate conflicting messages about the father's involvement, even undermining it by assuming that her way of doing the laundry is better than his. Most women (and men) grew up being told that child rearing was primarily a woman's job. Such a sense of responsibility is difficult to share, particularly if the man is also sending out mixed messages; he may say he wants to do more at home, but he may also find that his wife's subtle resistance is a useful excuse to dodge his own responsibilities.[35]

"The mother is the gatekeeper to fatherhood", says Dr. Michael Diamond, associate clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of California (Los Angeles). "She may allow it or obstruct"[21]. Linda Haas suggests that the working women who most welcome the father's help share three traits: They do not feel guilty about their jobs; their own fathers helped to raise them; and their husbands have flexible hours. One mother told the present writer:

> "Something happened when our first daughter was six months old, we were suffering through colic. I was crying, she was crying, and my husband took her from me. I said, 'No, I need to take care of her; I need to do this'. And he looked at me, and he was really startled, and he said, '*She's my daughter too,* and just because it's your way doesn't mean it's the right way'. I just assumed that I was the mom, I was the nurturer, I was doing it the right way. And damned if that child didn't stop crying anyway, just to spite me." (She laughed). "It really was a wake-up call to me, that he has instincts toward his children, and he acts on them, and it's not like when my father used to come in the door and my mother would say 'You kids go back in your room and I'll call you when dinner's ready'. She protected our father from us."[36]

"For many women, it's apparently better to maintain responsibility for parenthood, even at the cost of what we might call role overload, rather than yield some of that status and responsibility to a partner", says Michael Lamb, a psychologist with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in Bethesda, Maryland.[37]

The more educated a woman is, the more this sense of competitiveness seems to increase. A Boston University study showed that the older a mother was, and the higher her educational level and previous job status were, the more she monopolized parenting. "If women were as truthful as possible, they'd admit it's difficult both to ask husbands for help and to give over some of the responsibility", says sociologist Judith Auerbach, former director of the Institute for the Study of Women and Men at the University of Southern California. "Women feel that they're supposed to want to be involved, and if they're not, then there's something wrong with them."[18]

Dr. Ronald Levant, a Harvard Medical School psychologist who calls the home "the next frontier for men", suggests that a father can be more of a partner in the home and less of an employee of the wife, if he assumes total responsibility for a certain aspect of housework or child care; for example, he might get the children ready for school, and she might get them ready for bed.

Dr. Kyle Pruett, advises mothers to expect such territorial feelings, and not to squash them. "Talk about it. Humor is the best way to cope." He suggests that fathers should not rise to the competition. "If you learn some secret about your baby, don't keep it from the mother."[18]

Dr. Michael Diamond says that fathers should not turn themselves into "junior mothers", and that children do not need two competing mothers, but parents who help each other.

"The father's role is to serve as a structuring presence. He should be challenging. Pushing his child ahead. Leading the child to the outer world. Mentoring. One way the father introduces the child to the world is through play."

Indeed, some pioneering research at the University of California (Davis) found that, in addition to being good babysitters, adult male rhesus monkeys play more with baby monkeys than do mother monkeys. Ape fathers and human fathers, says Diamond, evoke play. "And play is a way to achieve mastery. It encourages mastery in the sense of being able to deal with phenomena. They don't control you; you control them. You're the rider on the horse; you aren't simply dragged along by it. The father gives you the sense of riding the horse. Of riding life."[21] One cautionary note: Fathers who try hard to connect with their children, to be superfathers, sometimes lose touch with their wives. Levine advises the men enrolled in his fathering sessions to schedule dates with their wives. He says, "Dating your wife has a dramatic effect on being able to connect with your kids. After all, you are a family."[21]

IV. Fathers in the community

One frontier of the new fatherhood is the father's role as a nurturer beyond his home, as a community builder. After men joined the Industrial Revolution, women became the lasting glue that held the web of social connections together in the schools and neighbourhoods and towns. These women have been the community builders, the school volunteers, who, more than men, raised money for community centres, and made sure that the parks were safe and well equipped. Nowadays, many women, too, have moved into the workplace and away from the neighbourhood. In recent decades, men have withdrawn from their roles as neighbourhood protectors; many value community less than their fathers and grandfathers did. According to a Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance study, 44 per cent of Americans believe that present-day fathers are not doing as well as in the past at the most basic element of community-building: showing respect for others.

Yet, many men yearn for something beyond today's limited definition of the father as breadwinner or even nurturer. Some are discovering the powerful community role that fathers once had. Some men are beginning to reclaim their stake in the neighbourhood, the school, the preschool, and they're finding it to be surprisingly fulfilling. The reasons for this reawakening range from the fact that so many men are feeling lonely to the fact that men are, often, no longer the sole or main breadwinners within their families; in order to express themselves, to feel potent, they may reach beyond work, beyond their house, in ways they may find surprisingly fulfilling and oddly familiar. The father connection can occur in a soccer league or father-child church programmes or parent-teacher activities. In the United States an increasing number of fathers enjoy such programmes as Y-Indian Guides, originated by the Young Men's Christian Association in the 1920s for fathers and their sons aged between 5 and 8. This programme, which is experiencing a boom in membership, focuses on strengthening the bond between parent and child while teaching children about native American culture. Unlike the Boy Scouts, fathers are required to attend every meeting and camp out with their children. Fathers comment that such community activities not only force them to carve out time for their children, but also to bond with other fathers. At schools and in neighbourhoods around the United States, father patrols are cutting back bushes in vacant plots of land and creating school security teams. Fathers of students at Arlington High in Indianapolis created Security Dads. They ride buses to and from sporting events or on field trips and students say that they prefer having the fathers around instead of security guards.[38] Fathers are also potent figures in the classroom, as volunteer aides or speakers.

Facing father fear

Although this is an era of increasing fatherlessness, when male role models are desperately needed, it is also a time of fear, when men who are involved with children are somehow suspect. This may be particularly true in the United States. Consciously or unconsciously, many childhood education professionals shy away from hiring male workers or encouraging male involvement in the classroom.

"The way to deal with this fear is not by curtailing the involvement of men with kids but by creating safety zones where men can care for children without fear or without creating fear", says Levine. Some organizations have demonstrated that safe zones, or at least safer zones, can be created. During the 1980s, for example, the Boy Scouts of America adopted a "two-deep leadership" policy, which requires that at least two adult leaders be present at all Boy Scout and Cub Scout activities. Yet the question is whether the only kind of male involvement to be sanctioned by the culture should be organized, public activities such as scouting, soccer or Big Brothers? Informal community connections between children and adults are just as important. Perhaps more important.

Some suggestions for creating safer neighbourhood zones for children and for adults are given below:

- Devise household and neighbourhood plans that prevent abuse and false accusations. The sexual abuse of children is an uncomfortable topic for many adults to discuss, so it should be addressed as part of a larger agenda of safety, including how to protect the children on the block from being injured in a traffic accident.

- Parents should know who lives where, which child belongs in which house. Each neighbour should accept the idea that he or she is responsible for all the children on the block. Parents should get to know any adult with whom children have a relationship. One warning sign: Does the adult interact on a social level mostly or entirely with children? While that is not a definitive sign of a child abuser, it is one that should cause parents to be extra cautious.

- When neighbourhood children are present in your home, adopt an open-door policy, whether they are with other children or adults. Invite the other parents to stop by. Whenever possible, rather than calling on the phone, walk over to your neighbour's house to retrieve your child in person.

- If you are going to offer activities for neighbourhood children, make sure that the adults know about it and are, at some level, involved.

Only so much can be accomplished by institutional or neighbourhood safeguards. The most important preventive measures take place between parent and child. Arm your children with knowledge about child abuse, and arm them with self-esteem. "A child who has good self-esteem, self-confidence, a close relationship with the parents, is much less likely to be victimized", says David Finklehor, co-director of the Family Research Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire. "Our studies show that predators sense that these are the kids who will tell, who can't be fooled or conned."

However, children who come from troubled households, who lack-self esteem, are the ones most in need of positive adult contact.

Changing institutional attitudes

In the years to come, institutions must reinvent their relationship with fathers. Levine believes that media should pay more attention to those companies that are father-friendly. For example, many magazines have published articles describing great companies for working mothers; few have focused on good companies for working fathers. He also believes that companies, schools and religious institutions must create ways for fathers to mentor, encourage and train other fathers. Levine offers a structured way to encourage male involvement. His book, *Getting Men Involved*, recently published by Scholastic Inc., which also publishes the magazine *Early Childhood Today*, shows how men can be more a part of early childhood education and how schools can help them do it.

"The book is designed for education professionals", says Levine, "but also for parents who want their children's school to be father friendly".

Several success stories are reported by Levine. A Head Start programme in Dayton, Ohio, recruits men from churches, businesses and other professions located in the area to volunteer to spend time in classrooms, where they assist in reading stories, help with computer projects and talk about their work and hobbies. In Minneapolis, nearly 40 per cent of the parents participating in Parents in Community (a programme designed to increase parental involvement in education) events are men. The programme attributes its success to the redefined role of the school bus driver. Treated as full members of the educational team, drivers spend one hour a day in the

classroom, go on all field trips and attend staff meetings and parent-teacher conferences. The male drivers involved then recruit other men as volunteers.

In calling for greater male involvement in early childhood education, Levine is not suggesting that women are not doing or cannot do a good job. But as he writes:

> "The stereotype that women alone should care for children, or that they alone are capable of caring for children, limits the opportunities and talents of both sexes. It leads women disproportionately into the 'caring' professions without exploring a broader set of career options, and it keeps men from broadening their career options to the 'caring' professions, despite their interests and abilities ... It also ... perpetuates the devaluation of women and children, linking them together in a 'feminine' world that is deemed less serious and important than the world of 'masculine' activities."[39]

Other institutions that involve parents or children are beginning to examine how their assumptions and language exclude or excuse men from participation. For example, in Colorado, the director of a community centre for parents told them why the name of the centre had been changed:

> "For eight years, we were called The Mother Center. We changed it to The Parent's Center. Right away we had dads with their toddlers taking part in the support groups. We had dads writing editorials for us. We had dads on the board. One guy showed up at a potluck with this contraption that looked like a steam engine; it was a barbecue smoker and he smoked all this meat for everybody. He was the provider of the meat. That's the first time he came, and he kept on coming."[40]

V. Teaching fatherhood

The rise in fatherlessness has lead to the creation of some programmes specifically focused on teenage fathers. One example, Responsive Fathers Program at the Philadelphia Children's Network, teaches young unmarried men to become better fathers and spouses by receiving counselling services and job search assistance. The participants, who range in age from 16 to 26 years, meet in group sessions once a week and discuss child rearing, male-female relationships, the job market and self-esteem. Young fathers are referred to the Program from hospitals, community centres, probation offices or by word of mouth. According to the Program's director, Thomas J. Henry, the social welfare system discourages fathers from family involvement, but he believes that this can be reversed: "You have many fathers declared absent when they are actually present. People think they're just making babies and don't have any feelings attached to that act. Everyone says, 'We want you to be a responsible father', but we give them nothing to be responsible with."[41]

There is also growing interest, in the public and private sectors, in programmes designed to nurture nurturing fathers. In Barcelona, Spain, Joan Mestres is project director of the Casa de Colors, where men learn to relate to their children in new ways. Despite Spanish society's image of the father as a figure of authority, she believes that some fathers are changing. She cites a recent encounter with a father who attended a storytelling workshop. "The father told me that to him telling stories was like starting a new sport. In the beginning it hurts because you get pain in your muscles; then after some practice, you find you can do it easily. Day after day, as you practise, you enjoy it more."[42]

A number of programmes have sprung up around the United States to help men explore the deeper dimensions of fatherhood. Paul Lewis started the Family University in San Diego several years ago; part of his curriculum is called the College of Fathering, or Dad's University. He started the programme, and accompanying newsletter, after having had lunch with a friend and discussing the divorce of a couple no one had suspected would split up. "We began to wonder why we wouldn't be next", he says. "We didn't want to be next. Then we got to thinking about why we didn't do more planning to be fathers." In 1978, they launched a newsletter entitled *Dads Only*:

> "The focus of it has been to put in the hands of busy guys ways to interact with their kids, how to keep their marriage fresh. The idea is to be preventive rather than remedial. My conviction is that a lot of men care deeply about their families, but their careers are on the fast track, and small parenting problems become big ones before they know it."

One rite-of-manhood model is Avance (Get Ahead), a church-based, Government- and corporate-funded retreat in San Antonio, Texas, where young Latino men participate in traditional American Indian ceremonies and take vows of non-violence and responsible fatherhood. As Nina Easton reported in the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, Avance founder Gloria Rodriquez originally taught only women. "But she quickly sensed that their newfound skills and confidence threatened their husbands and boyfriends. Rather than risk breaking up families, Avance opened its doors to men, who attend regular classes on child development and parenting techniques."[11]

Before boys inseminate

A more difficult problem is how to prepare young men for fatherhood before they become fathers. When the topic of fatherhood is broached in State schools, or even in most church youth programmes for that matter, it is almost always associated exclusively with sex, as if insemination (and how to avoid it) is the only aspect of fathering worth discussing. In American high schools

offering pregnant-minor programmes, the young women who participate in them are required to attend child-development and parenting courses in these same schools, young men, some of whom have fathered the children of these girls, are not required to take any kind of parenting course. Ultimately, the double standard shapes government policy. In Nashville, Tennessee, in 1993, Vice President Al Gore moderated a national conference entitled, "Reinventing family policy". During 10 hours of discussion by 40 panellists, the subject of fatherhood was barely mentioned. (Partly as a result, Gore organized a national fatherhood conference in 1994.) However, a handful of pioneering programmes have suggested that poverty and violence, especially violence towards women and children, can be decreased if society begins to find ways of teaching young men, directly and by example, in families, schools and religious institutions, about fatherhood before they become fathers. This objective might be achieved by requiring State-school students to take a child development or parenting eduction course; or it might be achievable by creating a "community curriculum" in parenting as an educational requirement but to be provided by religious, business and government programmes representing a diversity of cultures and family values.[43] In a recent interview, Vice President Al Gore said that such a course, either directly or as part of a community curriculum, "ought to be required in every school as a condition of graduation".[44]

Facing other inequities

Ultimately, the reinvention of fatherhood will demand not only programmes, but also a fundamental realignment of economic and social power between men and women.

"The biggest roadblocks to active participation by fathers in child care still are socio-cultural in terms of how fathers see themselves", says Professor Donna Lero of the University of Guelph in Ontario, and director of the National Child Care Study, which surveyed 22,000 families across Canada.[45]

Jack Levine, of Tallahassee, Florida, is frustrated with his fellow men, and with good reason. Over the past few years, Levine, a former high-school English teacher, has organized one of the most potent political efforts on behalf of children in the United States. As director of the Florida Center for Children & Youth, a private non-profit citizens' organization, he and his fellow activists launched the Florida Children's Campaign, a non-partisan political organizing effort. Among his coups, Jack Levine has not only led a massive voter registration drive of parents, but has arranged for child-care centres to stay open two extra hours on voting days: a practical way of obtaining the usually paltry parent vote. But Jack Levine does not overlook the fact that he is a rare creature in the world of child advocacy: a man. He says:

> "It's still the odd guy who fully shares responsibility in the home, and outside the home it's the same proportion. Last night, I spoke at a PTA meeting about the politics of childhood. We had a fantastic turnout. Every seat was filled. We had about 150 people. Of those, 35 kids and nine were guys. The rest were women."

Not only do men not show up for the meetings, they also do not join the advocacy groups (Jack Levine estimates that of his group's membership of 2,000 Floridians, 75 per cent are women). They are much less likely than women to write letters to the editor on behalf of children's issues and they are, according to many polls, less likely than women to vote in support of education or for government programmes for children.

One reason why women act more forcefully than men on these issues is because they carry a greater burden of child-rearing duties and custody. Jack Levine says:

> "In Florida, 87 out of 100 custodies are held by women. One reason is that, in my state, 53 percent over a four year period of marriages end in divorce. (Though if these marriages survive the first five years the rate of success is high.) My point is that if

a high proportion of marriages dissolve and upon dissolution, 90 percent of the children go to the mother it's the mom who's going to be carrying the primary responsibility."

As long as women carry the bulk of the responsibility for children, in intact marriages as well as among divorced couples, men will continue to be presumed to be less responsible.

To some extent, fatherlessness is the result of legal processes that, supported by societal attitudes and the recent historical non-nurturant role of men, have tended overwhelming to favour women in custodial decisions. One way of addressing that inequity would be to reform custody laws that discriminate against men, and there is some movement in this direction. But this approach will not be successful without concurrent progress on several other fronts. Marriage must be encouraged; divorce laws must be reformed, and mediation should be widely available. Nowadays, dissolving either a business contract or a business partner is much more difficult in the United States than dissolving a marriage. No other contract may be breached as easily. During the past two decades, reform in American divorce law has not only offered mutually agreed-upon, no-fault divorce, but has also created a right of unilateral divorce. This unilateral feature is prompting calls for reform. The National Council for Children's Rights, an organization of non-custodial parents, argues that courts should provide mediation in divorce proceedings, in an effort to keep both parents as involved as possible in their children's lives after the divorce. Associated with this question is the issue of fathers' post-separation/divorce responsibilities usually being described in terms of material support (eg. implicitly reinforcing the breadwinner role in addition to presenting very real obligations).

Currently, in the United States and other countries, there is a widespread movement towards toughening child-support laws and collection techniques. The approach adopted in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and overhauled in 1993, is emerging as one of the world's toughest. To ensure compliance, the enforcing agency has been given broad powers to track wayward fathers by examining their tax and employment records, and when necessary, to dun them. The agency will also seek the arrest of a parent who does not pay. Such a movement towards the tougher enforcement of child support laws, though sometimes overly harsh, is generally overdue. In the United States, a broader approach is emerging, which is more appropriate for men who are not affluent. During the mid-1980s, the conventional wisdom among American reformers was that the way to get child support payments out of fathers was by garnishing their wages. However, if the father changes jobs frequently, or cannot find work, or does not want to work, this approach does not work. So several States now require fathers to join job-search programmes: In Grand Rapids, Michigan, such a programme found jobs for 432 of 1,077 men. As a result, child-support payments increased by more than 300 per cent in eight months.[46]

Extensive social and economic rebalancing, a new gender contract, must take place if society is to make successfully the transition into a less gender-weighted view of parenthood. As long as men, women and institutions allow mothers to monopolize parenthood, by choice or by default, it will be difficult for men to become more active in nurturance. The feminization of caring limits positive growth for both men and women. Gender inequalities favouring men (e.g. higher wages) dent the opportunities for men to become more active parents. Reducing wage inequalities between men and women would reduce the disincentives to families of working men assuming more caring responsibilities. The actions of abusive, violent men will also continue to affect all men; society must put as much effort into the educational or retraining needs of men as it puts into their incarceration. As in the early days of the feminist movement, men may have to undergo a peer-supported redefinition process that creates enough awareness to sponsor societal change. Reinventing fatherhood requires a redefinition of maleness as well as a reassessment of motherhood.

The advantages

If men and women ever come to see the role of fatherhood differently, and give it more value in the home and in institutions, the results could be impressive. Despite the paucity of studies on fatherhood, considerable evidence exists of the power of nurturing father love. For example:

- Children with involved fathers are more nurturing and generative, according to Dr. Kyle Pruett. He says that these children are much more likely than other kids to raise pets: "My guess is these kids will find it easier to nurture their own children." This good outcome may be due to something intrinsic about fatherhood as a male occupation, or it may simply be, as Pruett puts it, because two active parents are better than "one and a lump".[18]

- Fathers who spend more time with their young children appear to have an important influence on how compassionate they will be as adults. A study extending over 26 years, the first study of empathy that tracked young children into adulthood, shows that paternal involvement was the single strongest, parent-related factor in adult empathy. The father's influence "was quite astonishing", says psychologist Richard Koestner, McGill University, Montreal. Fathers who spend time alone with children more than twice a week, giving baths, meals and basic care, reared the most compassionate adults.[47] Among the explanations for the father-empathy link: fathers who spend more time with their children *model* empathy by being there long enough to care for their children's needs, or perhaps fathers who are willing to spend a lot of time with their children are more empathetic themselves. "My hypothesis is that these children do better not because their fathers are more involved, but because their parents as a pair both feel happier with this arrangement", says Michael Lamb. "Father involvement allows both parents to feel that they are achieving and fulfilling themselves."[48]

- Boys with strong, warm, nurturing fathers are more socially competent, more persistent at solving problems and more self-directed, according to Norma Radin, a professor at the School of Social Work at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, writing in the periodical entitled *Social Work in Education*. Among her findings: boys as young as five months who had more contact with their fathers were friendlier with adult strangers than were those who had less. Two psychologists, John W. Santrock and R. A. Warshak, from Dallas, Texas, report that boys who lived with their fathers after divorce were warmer, had a higher degree of self-esteem and were more mature and independent than boys who lived with their mothers. However, when the father is not present physically or emotionally, boys tend to be more aggressive and less compliant, and they have greater problems in preschool with peer relationships.[49]

- Girls with supportive fathers are more likely to be successful in their careers.

  "My father loved me unconditionally", says Elisa Sanchez, who directs Trade and Economic Development for Transborder Affairs for San Diego County, California. She recalls that even when her parents divorced, her father was a strong presence in her life. He continued to support her and her sisters, remembered their birthdays, and made a point of seeing and talking with them as much as possible. Says Veronica Collazo, Director of the Office of Training Systems for the United States Postal Service: "My father was a tremendous source of encouragement, always so supportive of my activities, whether they were traditional or non-traditional." Both women, who also had strong mothers, attribute much of their success in their careers to their father's nurturance.[50]

- Fathers are also the primary influence regarding sex roles for sons and daughters. A father who is powerful, nurturing and available is usually seen as a role model by a son; a weak father is less likely to be imitated. A growing body of research shows that boys as young as

three years old are searching for masculine models on which to build their sense of self, but, as Samuel Osherson writes, "the urge to identify with father creates the crucial dilemma for boys. Boys have to give up mother for father but, who is father?"[51]

Men growing up without a good gender model grow up with an inflated, hypermasculine view of manhood and are therefore more prone to violence. Ken Canfield's National Center for Fathering investigated the images of fatherhood held by 100 Minnesota prison inmates. They were asked to describe men whom they considered father figures. Less than 12 per cent even put their own father on the list; 52 per cent named sports or entertainment heroes as their father figures. "I work with a number of people who work with juvenile delinquent kids. I've never had a single case worker who has ever had a kid report a healthy relationship with their dad. Not one out of hundreds", says Paul Lewis. He and other researchers are also convinced that the father's role is as important, and possibly more important, than the mother's in giving the son or the daughter confidence in sexual identity. "I'm convinced by the available research, and after working with thousands of families, that when fathers withdraw from their adolescent daughters, because of discomfort with their daughter's sexuality, that this sets the stage for the daughter's sexual experimentation or promiscuity; the daughters are looking for the closeness that has been withdrawn by their fathers." A daughter looks to her father to confirm her attractiveness; when that is withheld, she looks elsewhere, often with a sense of desperation.

VI. Walking tall: a new paradigm

Considering the continued poor conditions of women in much of the world, and the rise of fatherlessness, it is difficult to see how a new fatherhood could be spreading. Indeed, the new fatherhood may be no closer than when it has been announced in times past. Robert Griswold of the University of Oklahoma, and author of *Fatherhood in America: A History*, looks at "the invention of the new fatherhood". Articles in popular magazines "from the '20s, '30s, '40s, and '50s don't look very different from what we're seeing today. Stories about fathers not spending enough time with their children or how-to articles teaching dads how to interact with their kids have been around for decades. It's amazing how similar they are to what's appearing now". While Griswold is skeptical, he does not, however, rule out a paradigm shift.[17] Yet evidence for something close to a paradigm shift does exist.

Thirty years ago it was rare to see men changing babies' nappies or dropping children off at the day-care centre or school. Nowadays it is far more common, and nearly everyone knows some man who has chosen, or had, to stay at home to look after young children. Active fathering, however, is still far from being the norm.[52]

Is a new fatherhood finally here? Or is society simply returning to an older, much earlier model? Is shared breadwinning and shared parenting in humanity's bones?

In October 1994, anthropologists announced the discovery in Ethiopia of *Australopithecus ramidus*, the so-called missing link, a diminutive creature positioned between humans and apes. While the scientists have not yet determined whether this oldest known direct human ancestor walked upright, two bones suggests that it did. This discovery could overturn the conventional wisdom that humankind's ancestors learned to walk upright only after they had left the forests for the savannahs. *Ramidus*, who lived in a forest filled with carnivores, had little to gain by standing upright, except one thing. Females may have sought mates who could help care for offspring, the ones who walked upright, using their hands to carry foods and infants, according to anatomist Owen Lovejoy of Kent State University. "If further finds confirm that our oldest direct ancestor learned to walk in the primeval forest", *Newsweek* reports, "it will push to center stage a very '90s notion: the crucial spur toward becoming human was changing from a tooth-baring aggressive ape to one that carried home dinner and helped raise the kids."[53]

Indeed, for much of humankind's history, men and women hunted or gathered, or tended the fields together, with their children nearby. "Tribal families are usually built on a social rather than biological basis".

According to an occasional paper published by the IYF secretariat of the United Nations Secretariat, "The biological mother's sisters may be called mothers, and the biological father's brothers, or in some cases even the mother's brothers, may also be responsible for fathering the child ... This type of family rarely leaves orphaned children, because there is an abundance of parents."[54] In tribal families, the sexes are not exactly equal, but they are complementary. In her book *Families: Celebration and hope in a world of change,* Jo Boyden writes that among the Mbuti men of north-east Zaire, a man has minimal contact with his child until it is two years' old. But then the mother brings the child to him and holds it to his breast. The baby tries to suck, often crying *ema*! (mother!) and then the father gives his child its first solid food, teaching it to say *eba* (father). The anthropologist Colin Turnbull says that Mbuti men are first perceived by their children as "another kind of mother - one who cannot give milk but does provide other kinds of food".[6] In colonial America, men were expected to fulfil well-defined, important domestic roles in the lives of their children. Fathers were not only responsible for their children's moral and spiritual upbringing but also for their children's education beyond the home. They introduced their children (the emphasis was, unfortunately, too much on boys) into the world of work and adults. Children often worked and played in close proximity to their working fathers, on farms

or in shops. Such intimacy was swept away by the Industrial Revolution. Men trudged off to the factories and the mines far from home. By the end of the nineteenth century, men were stereotyped as wage-earners and women as housewives, separate and unequal.

The industrial age family may have been something of a historical anomaly. Society is now in the middle of a painful transition to post-industrial parenting; painful most of all for children whose parents are caught between two eras. But change is coming. Fax machines, computers, modems and other technological advances make it easier for mothers and fathers to work part time or full time from home, rediscovering some of the attributes of the family farm and village. The transformation may seem glacial, but seen in the light of history or evolution, it is an overnight event. Maybe modern man is remembering why he stood up in the first place.

Notes

[1]David Blankenhorn, "The vanishing father", *Atlanta Journal-Atlanta Constitution*, 4 November 1990, p. G-1.

[2]Richard Louv, *Fatherlove: What We Need; What We Seek; What We Must Create* (New York, Pocket Books, 1993).

[3]Jo Boyden, *Families: Celebration and Hope in a World of Change.* (London, Gaia Books, 1993), p. 68.

[4]Ibid., p. 70.

[5]Ibid., p. 72

[6]Ibid., p. 74.

[7]Louv, op. cit., p. 35.

[8]"The revolution in family life", *The Futurist*, September/October 1990, pp. 53-54.

[9]Myron Magnet, "The American family, 1992", *Fortune*, 10 August 1992, p. 43; Paul Taylor, "'Two faces of fatherhood': Dads become more domesticated, more distant", *Washington Post*, 16 June 1991, p. A-1.

[10]Remarks made by Dr. Louis W. Sullivan at the Institute for American Values Council on families in America, New York City, 9 January 1992.

[11]Nina J. Easton, "Life without father", *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, 14 June 1992, p. 15.

[12]Charles Donovan, "Why children need both their parents", *San Diego Union Tribune*, 2 August 1992, p. C-4.

[13]Taylor, loc. cit.

[14]Magnet, loc. cit., p. 44.

[15]John Leo, "A pox on Dan and Murphy", *U.S. News & World Report*, 1 June 1992, p. 19.

[16]Judy Mann, "Murphy, where's my Pa?", *Washington Post*, 15 May 1992, p. E-3.

[17]Dr. Robert Glossop and Ish Theilheimer, "Does society support involved fathering?", *Transition*, March 1994, p. 11.

[18]Lisa Schroepfer, "Dad: new & improved", *American Health*, June 1991, p. 64.

[19]Sue Shellenbarger, "Work & family", *Wall Street Journal*, 27 May 1992, p. B-1.

[20]Glossop and Theilheimer, loc. cit., p. 9.

[21]Aaron Latham, "Fathering the nest", *M.*, May 1992, pp. 66-75.

[22]Richard Louv, "Data lacking on success of work-family programs", *San Diego Union Tribune*, 14 August 1994.

[23]Linda Haas, "Equal parenthood and social policy: Lessons from a study in Sweden", in *Parental Leave and Child Care: Setting Research and Policy Agenda*, J. S. Hyde and M. J. Essex, eds. (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Temple University Press, 1991), pp. 325-405.

[24]Janet Shibley Hyde, Marilyn J. Essex and Francine Horton, "Fathers and parental leave: attitudes and experiences", *Journal of Family Issues*, vol. 14, No. 4 (1993), pp. 617-618.

[25]"Couple makes a case for sharing load", *San Diego Union Tribune*, 23 October 1993.

[26]Louv, op. cit., p. 103.

[27]Randall Beach, "Househusbands", *Utne Reader*, March/April 1990, pp. 79-82.

[28]Richard Louv, "Absent fathers: remaking fatherhood", *Parents*, December 1994, pp. 180-182.

[29]Louv, op. cit., p. 88.

[30]Boyden, op. cit., p. 69-70.

[31]Arlie Hochschild, "The second shift: Employed women are putting in another day of work at home", *Utne Reader*, March/April 1990, pp. 66-73.

[32]John P. Robinson, "The hard facts about hard work", *Utne Reader*, March/April 1990, p. 70.

[33]Richard Louv, "How fathers feel ...", *Parents*, December 1993, p. 228.

[34]Ibid., p. 232.

[35]Louv, op. cit., p. 254.

[36]Ibid., p. 108.

[37]"The new father: part reality, part media hype, says psychologist", *Stanford News Release*, 22 February 1989.

[38]Hank Whittemore, "Security dads", *Parade*, 27 September 1992, pp. 20-22.

[39]Richard Louv, "Let's send men back to school – to help", *San Diego Union Tribune*, 8 January 1994.

[40]Louv, op. cit., p. 153.

[41]Sophfronia Scott Gregory, "Teaching young fathers the ropes", *Time*, 10 August 1992, p. 49.